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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002587

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES BLAKEMAN FOR EUR A/S DAN FRIED, P, R, E

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: DUTCH MINISTER NICOLAI'S UPCOMING VISIT TO U.S.

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CHAT BLAKEMAN FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Dutch Minister for European Affairs Atzo Nicolai views his first visit to the U.S. as an opportunity to strengthen transatlantic ties by cultivating a solid working relationship with senior USG interlocutors. A consummate European insider and political survivor, Nicolai could be a powerful ally in promoting U.S. interests in Europe, including with regard to Turkish EU accession talks and efforts to reach out to European Muslims. Post recommends that the Department support Dutch requests for high-level introductory meetings for Nicolai with P, R, and E. END SUMMARY.

BUILDING A TRANSATLANTIC FUTURE

2. (C) During a September 19 meeting with Charge, State Secretary (Minister) For European Affairs Atzo Nicolai said

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that he hopes to use his upcoming trip to the United States to explore opportunities for reinvigorating transatlantic dialogue and cooperation. Nicolai said this would be his first trip to the United States, noting that his duties during the Dutch EU presidency last year and then supervising the Dutch referendum on the EU's constitutional treaty had limited his ability to travel. His experiences during this period, however, had reinforced his belief in the critical importance of the transatlantic relationship in defining Europe's future. On issues ranging from Turkey to Ukraine, he said, it was clear that the U.S. and European interests were linked. Nicolai noted that he would be giving at least two speeches during his visit to Washington on the "Future of Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship."

EUROPEAN ENLARGEMENT/INTEGRATION

3. (C) Nicolai said he was eager to learn first-hand U.S. views on European integration and enlargement. The Dutch "no" vote on the EU's Constitutional Treaty, he added, had thrown a lot of long-standing Dutch and European assumptions on their head. The Dutch are now starting to engage in a "national dialogue" on Europe -- a project Nicolai will oversee -- but neither the government nor the public has a clear idea where it will lead. The answer will have serious implications not only for the EU, but also for the transatlantic relationship and specifically relations between the EU and NATO. Nicolai reiterated that he wanted to make sure he understood clearly U.S. views before proceeding too far with the "national dialogue." Noting that the referendum had painfully exposed a gap between the Dutch public and the political elite, he said he would also appreciate learning more about how the U.S. government effectively communicated its vision at home and abroad.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT TURKEY?

4. (C) Noting that he planned to arrive in the U.S. on October 4, Nicolai said he assumed Washington interlocutors would be interested in discussing the implications of the EU's October 3 decision on Turkey -- whatever that might turn out to be. Nicolai praised the U.S. for its quiet, but essential diplomacy during the Dutch EU presidency to help bring Turkey to the table, but noted that subsequent events had put the entire process in doubt. Coordination between the U.S. and the EU will remain critical both in the period leading up to October 3 and in managing its aftermath, he added.

REACHING OUT TO MUSLIMS

5. (C) Turning to the "cultural" side of his visit (Note: Nicolai's portfolio includes international cultural affairs.), Nicolai said that he was particularly interested in looking at creative ways to use culture to improve the image of "the West" in the Islamic world. The Foreign

Ministry, he added, is considering establishing a "Mediterranean Center" in the Netherlands, along the lines of the L'Institute du Monde Arabe, to promote cultural interactions with Muslims. While this plan is in an early stage, he would be eager to explore with Washington interlocutors ideas for enhancing U.S.-European efforts to reach out to Muslims in Europe and elsewhere. Pointing to the USG's active outreach program, Charge agreed that this was an area where the U.S. and the Dutch could benefit from a candid discussion of our positive and negative experiences to date, and where we might find some creative ways to join forces.

COMMENT:

16. (C) Although frequently overshadowed by Foreign Minister Bot and Development Minister van Ardenne, Nicolai is a key player in the Dutch government on European Integration issues and a true political survivor. Many observers predicted he would take the fall for the government's disastrous EU Constitutional Treaty referendum, but he managed to accept responsibility for the fiasco before parliament while keeping his credibility and reputation intact, and very possibly enhanced. After focusing almost exclusively on internal EU developments for the past year, his decision to seek out a working relationship with the USG is a late, but welcome development. As a consummate European insider, he could be a powerful ally in promoting both our transatlantic agenda and Muslim outreach efforts in Europe. We should not let this opportunity to cultivate a potentially useful contact slip away. Post understands that a meeting with EUR A/S Fried is already on Nicolai's schedule; we recommend that Washington also support Dutch requests for other requested high-level introductory visits, including with P, R, and E. END

COMMENT.

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BLAKEMAN